

DOJ gives Congress new classified documents on Russia probe

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By MARY CLARE JALONICK

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department says it has given House Republicans new classified information related to the Russia investigation after lawmakers had threatened to hold officials in contempt of Congress or even impeach them.

A spokeswoman for House Speaker Paul Ryan said Saturday that the department has partially complied with subpoenas from the House Intelligence and Judiciary committees after officials turned over more than a thousand new documents this week. House Republicans had given the Justice Department and FBI a Friday deadline for all documents, most of which are related to the origins of the FBI's Russia investigation and the handling of its probe into Democrat Hillary Clinton's emails. Ryan spokeswoman AshLee Strong said the department asked for more time and they will get it — for now.

"Our efforts have resulted in the committees finally getting access to information that was sought months ago, but some important requests remain to be completed," Strong said in a statement Saturday. "Additional time has been requested for the outstanding items, and based on our understanding of the process we believe that request is reasonable. We expect the department to meet its full obligations to the two committees."

The efforts by the Justice Department over the last week to deliver documents to the House Republicans appear to have at least temporarily diffused a monthslong standoff with Congress. Democrats have criticized the multiple document requests, charging that they are intended to discredit the department and distract from or even undermine special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into the Trump campaign's Russia ties and whether there was obstruction of justice.

In a [letter](#) sent to House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes, R-Calif., late Friday, the Justice Department said it had that day provided a classified letter to his panel regarding whether the FBI used "confidential human sources" before it officially began its Russia investigation in 2016. Bolstered by President Donald Trump, Nunes has been pressing the department on an informant who spoke to members of Trump's campaign as the FBI began to explore the campaign's ties to Russia. Trump has called the matter "spygate," though multiple Republicans who have been briefed on the informant have downplayed its significance.

In the letter, the Justice Department's acting assistant director of congressional affairs, Jill Tyson, said Nunes had also asked for transcripts of conversations between confidential human sources and Trump campaign officials. She said the department had referred that request to National Intelligence Director Dan Coats.

Tyson's letter said the department had also given Nunes materials related to the department's guidelines under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. Republicans have for months questioned whether the department abused that act when prosecutors and agents in 2016 applied for and received a secret warrant to monitor the communications of Trump campaign associate Carter Page.

The department is also working to provide outstanding documents related to former British spy Christopher Steele, Tyson said, and the dossier he compiled of anti-Trump research during the presidential campaign. Trump and congressional Republicans have charged that the research in the dossier, paid for by Clinton's campaign and the Democratic National Committee, was used inappropriately to obtain the warrant on Page.

House Speaker Paul Ryan has backed the document requests, and he led a meeting last week with committee chairmen and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein to try to resolve the issue. In an interview on Fox News Channel two days after that meeting, on June 17, Nunes said if they don't get the documents by this week, "there's going to be hell to pay" and indicated the House could act on contempt or even impeachment. A spokesman for Nunes did not immediately respond to a request for comment Saturday.

Tyson also wrote House Judiciary Committee Chairman Robert Goodlatte, R-Va., and House Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Trey Gowdy, R-S.C., who have requested more than a million documents as part of multiple investigations into the FBI and Justice Department's handling of the Russia and Clinton probes. Tyson said the department has already provided more than 800,000 documents for review and "the FBI produced over 1,400 pages of responsive materials" on Friday, among other documents already sent to the panel.

The letter says FBI is also working to address a request about "proposed, recommended or actual" surveillance on the Clinton Foundation. Tyson said the department was responding in a separate, classified letter, and that the request had proven "difficult to address." She said the department hoped to talk to lawmakers further about it.

In the letters, Tyson said the department had built "new tools" to search top secret documents and had diverted resources from other congressional requests.

Read the letter to Nunes: <http://apne.ws/XBmX2Db>

Read the letter to Goodlatte and Gowdy: <http://apne.ws/WnqLdrO>

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